
CAPITOL CONNECTION

A Weekly Update of News and Views
For Opinion Shapers and Policy Makers

Congressman Gary G. Miller
42nd District, California



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Congress Passes Urgently Needed Tax Relief

On Wednesday, the House approved a measure designed to prevent the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) from impacting an additional 21 million American taxpayers. First enacted by Congress in 1969, the AMT was originally designed to prevent the wealthiest 155 Americans from avoiding taxes. However, in the years since, the number of families impacted by the AMT has increased steadily. This coming year, without action by Congress, the AMT would have expanded its reach to 21 million Americans, subjecting them to an average tax increase of more than \$2,400. Importantly, the bill passed this week does not contain any offsetting tax increases. Congressman Miller is pleased that Congress has finally acted to deliver crucial tax relief for hard-working American families. The bill now heads to the President's desk where it is expected to be signed into law shortly.

Children's Health Insurance Program Extended Through 2009

This week, Congress voted to extend the popular State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) through March 31, 2009. SCHIP was created in 1997 to provide health insurance for children in households earning less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line, or an income of approximately \$40,000 per year for a family of four. Since its inception, the program has administered health insurance for millions of children across the country. Earlier this year, Congressman Miller cosponsored legislation to extend the SCHIP program for an additional 18 months and is pleased that Congress has passed an extension to provide health care for impoverished children. Congressman Miller remains committed to ensuring the SCHIP program remains available for its intended target, our nation's poorest citizens.

Congress Approves Year-End Spending Bill

More than two and a half months after the start of the fiscal year, Congress this week finally approved a \$550 billion spending bill to fund the government through September of next year. At the urging of fiscal conservatives including Congressman Miller, the measure came to the floor without \$22 billion in extraneous spending above and beyond the amount requested by the President earlier this year. Also included in the bill is \$70 billion to fund the needs of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as \$7.5 billion in emergency funding for initiatives such as construction of the border fence and drought relief. While Congressman Miller is pleased that Congress has funded our nation's priorities in a fiscally responsible way, he remains deeply concerned by language included in the bill which will delay construction of the border fence. Specifically, the bill prevents any construction from moving forward until the Department of Homeland Security consults with other agencies and local communities to reduce adverse impacts on local culture, the environment, and quality of life. When Congress returns next year, Congressman Miller will continue working aggressively to ensure that our country lives within its means while funding critical priorities like securing our borders.

Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Update

Under the first phase of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), which went into effect earlier this year, all persons traveling by air between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean are required to present a passport to enter or reenter the United States. Starting January 31, 2008, at all land and sea ports of entry, United States citizens will need to present a government-issued ID and proof of United States citizenship. Congressman Miller would like to advise individuals with international travel plans that the WHTI is scheduled to go into full effect as early as the summer of 2008, at which point all persons including United States citizens will be required to provide a passport or other approved documents at all land and sea ports of entry. For assistance in obtaining a United States passport, please contact Congressman Miller's District Office at (714) 257-1142. For more information on the WHTI, you can also visit the Department of State's website at www.travel.state.gov or the Department of Homeland Security's website at www.dhs.gov.